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See application file for complete search history.

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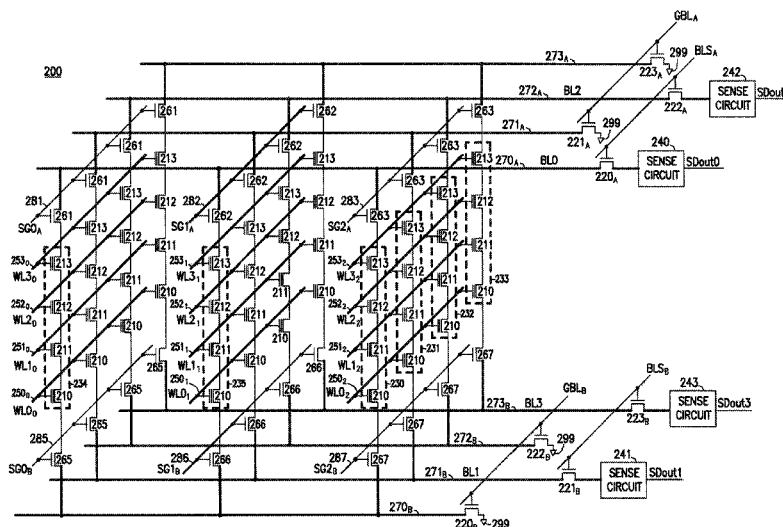
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

- Some embodiments include apparatuses and methods having a first set of conductive lines, a second set of conductive lines, and memory cells located in different levels of the apparatuses and arranged in memory cell strings. At least a portion of the first set of conductive lines is configured as a first set of data lines. At least a portion of the second set of conductive lines is configured as a second set of data lines. Each of the memory strings is coupled to a respective conductive line in the first set of conductive lines and a respective conductive line in the second set of conductive lines. Other embodiments including additional apparatuses and methods are described.

- 20 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets**

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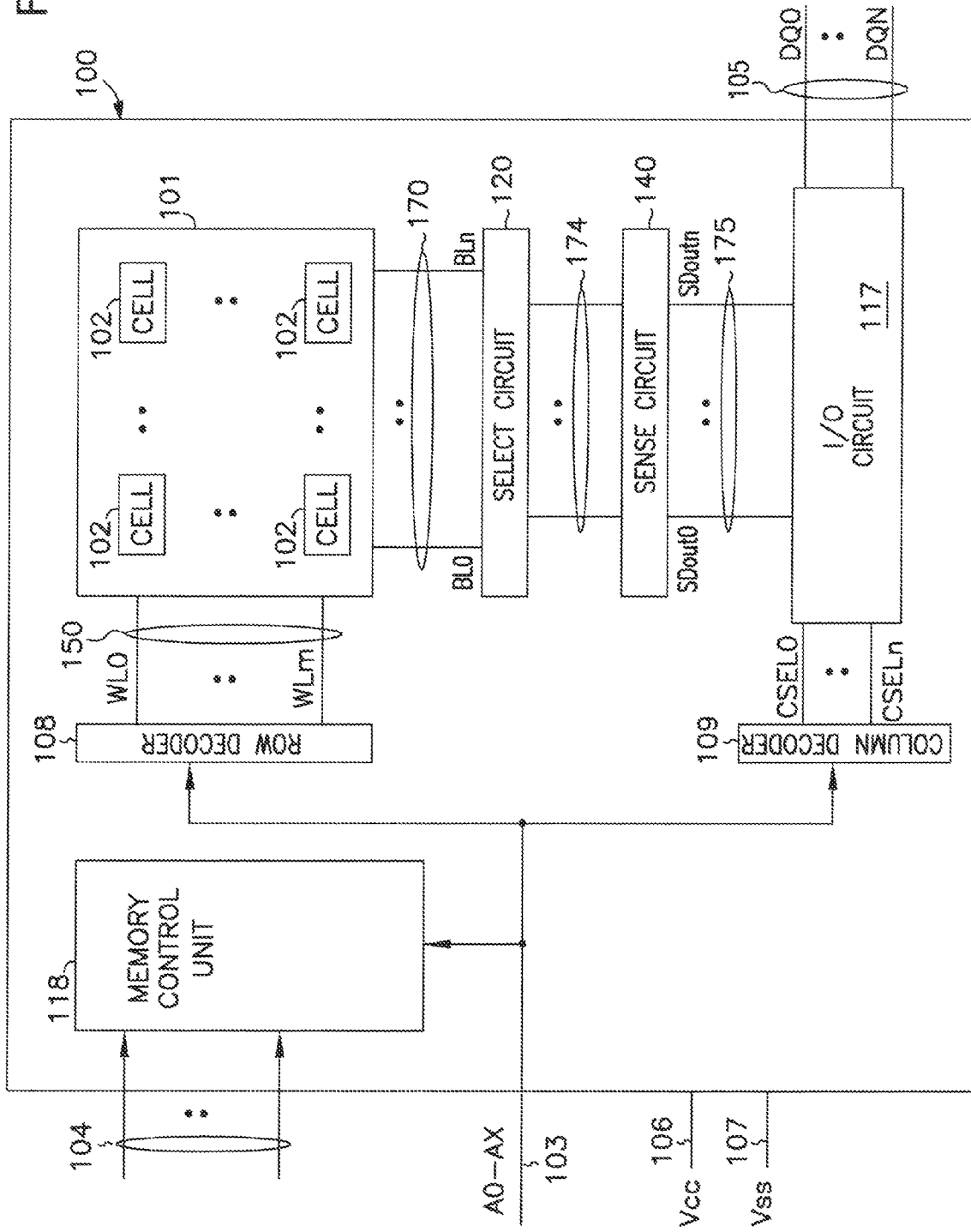
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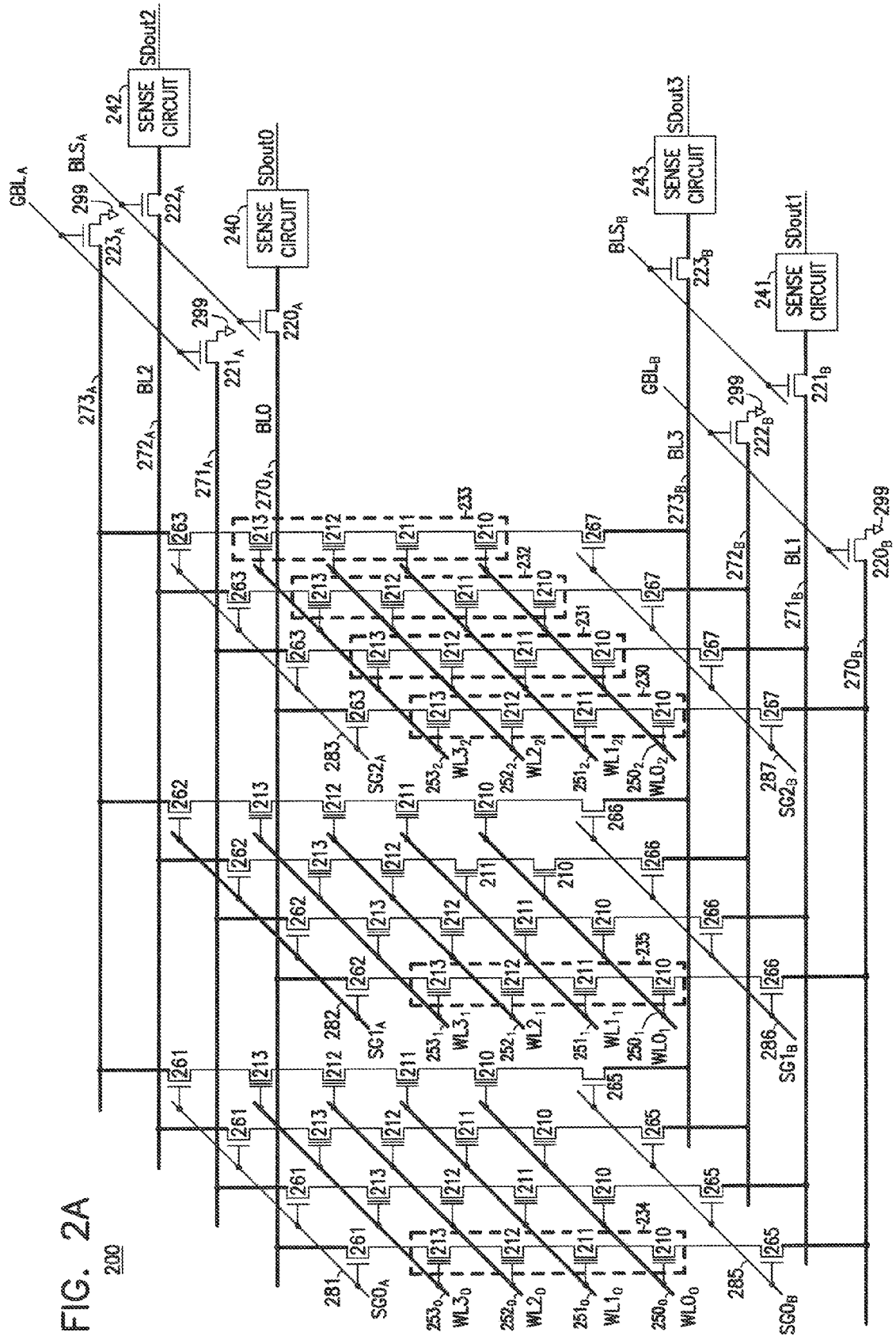
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FIG. 1





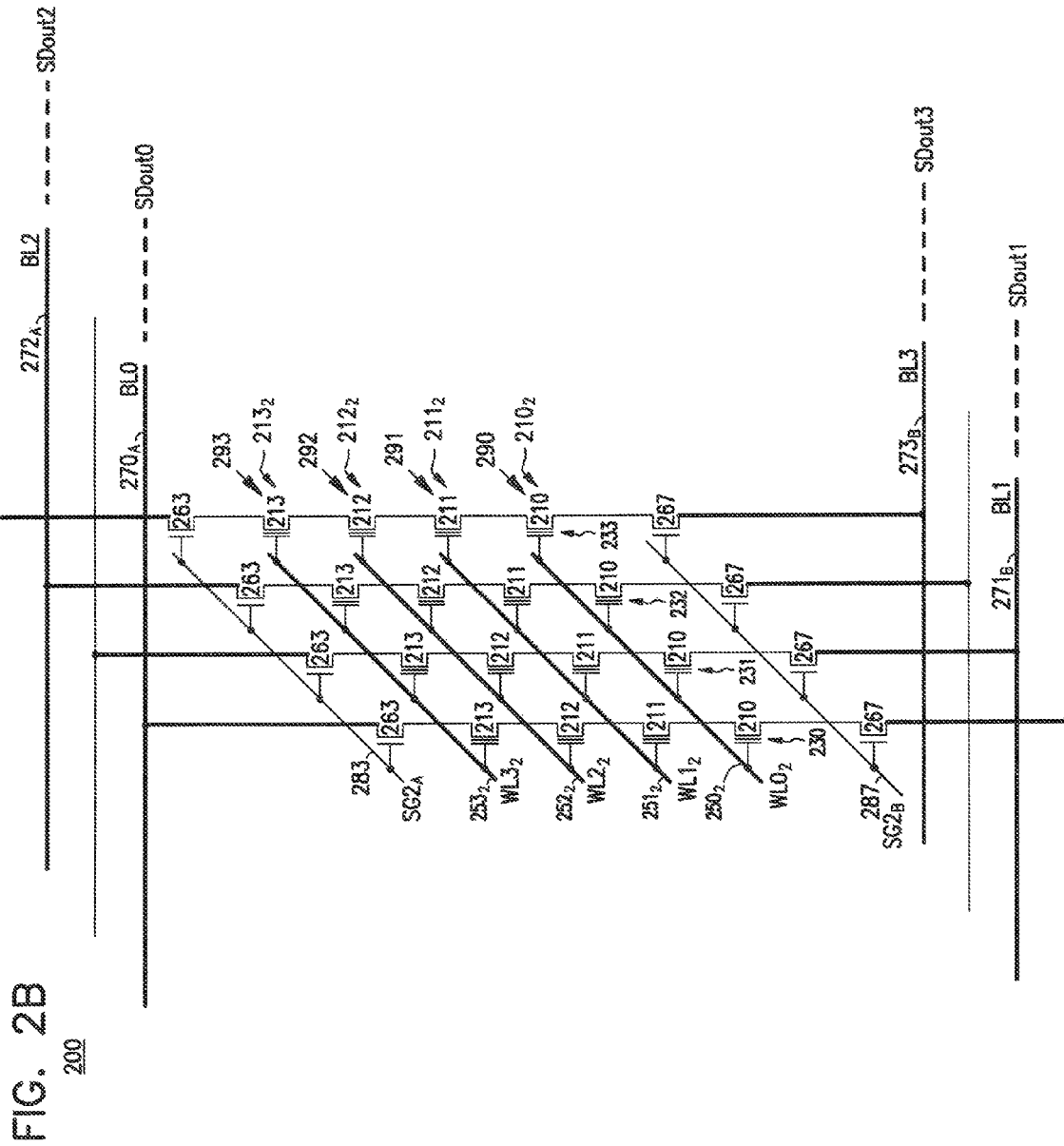


FIG. 3

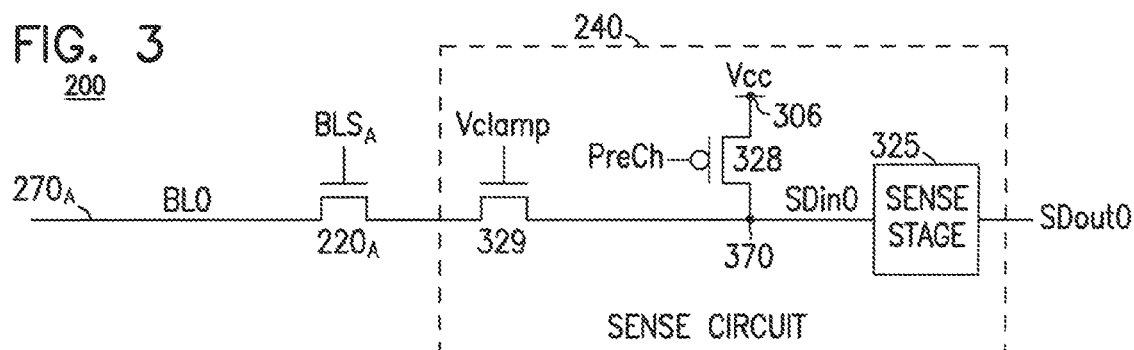
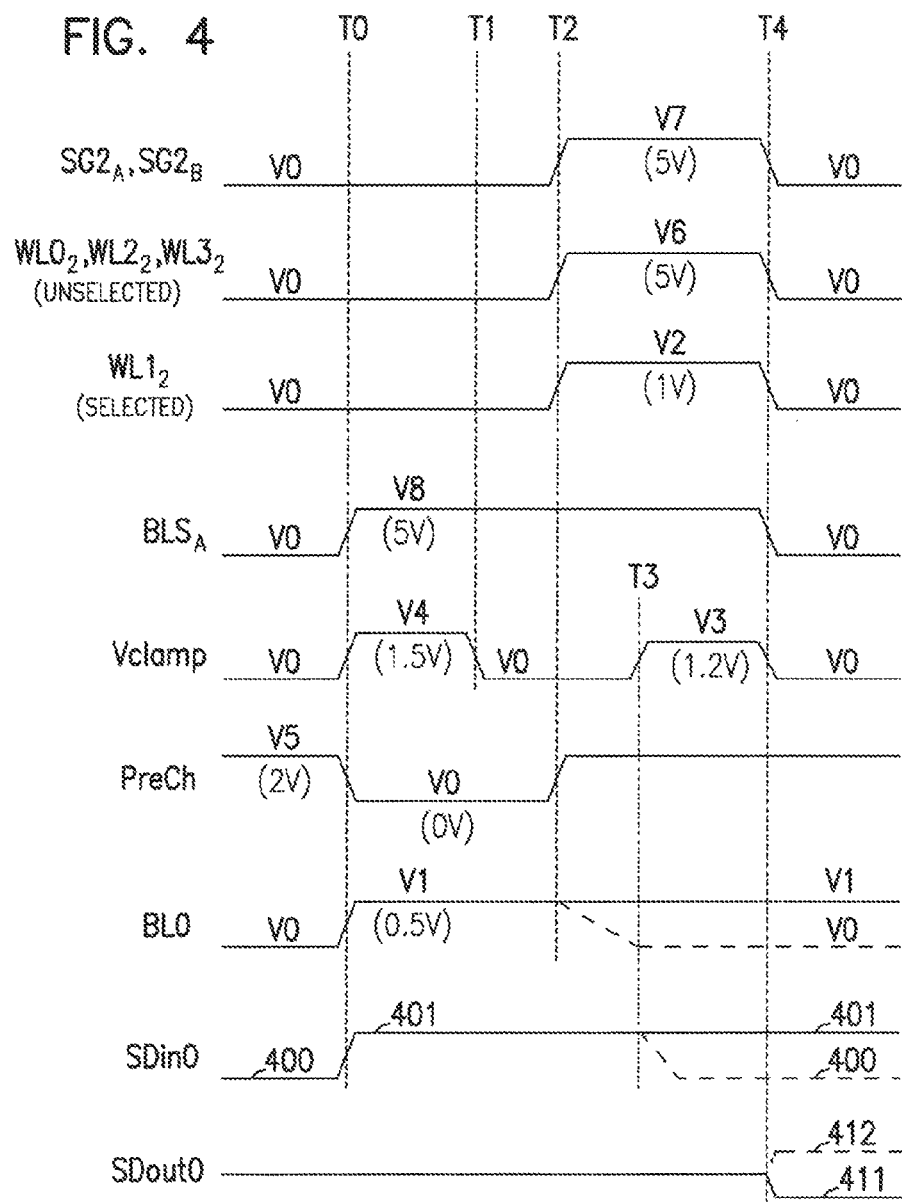
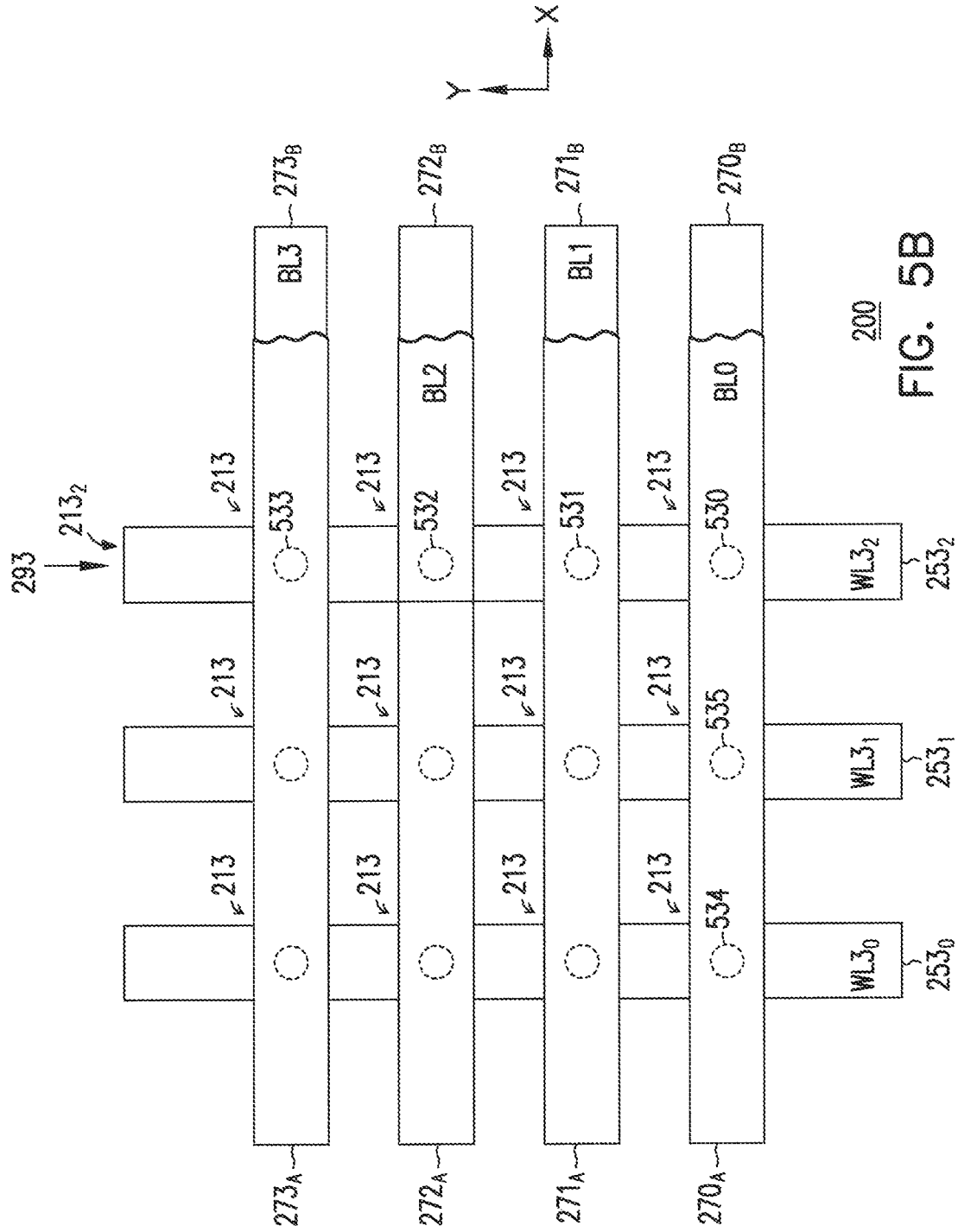


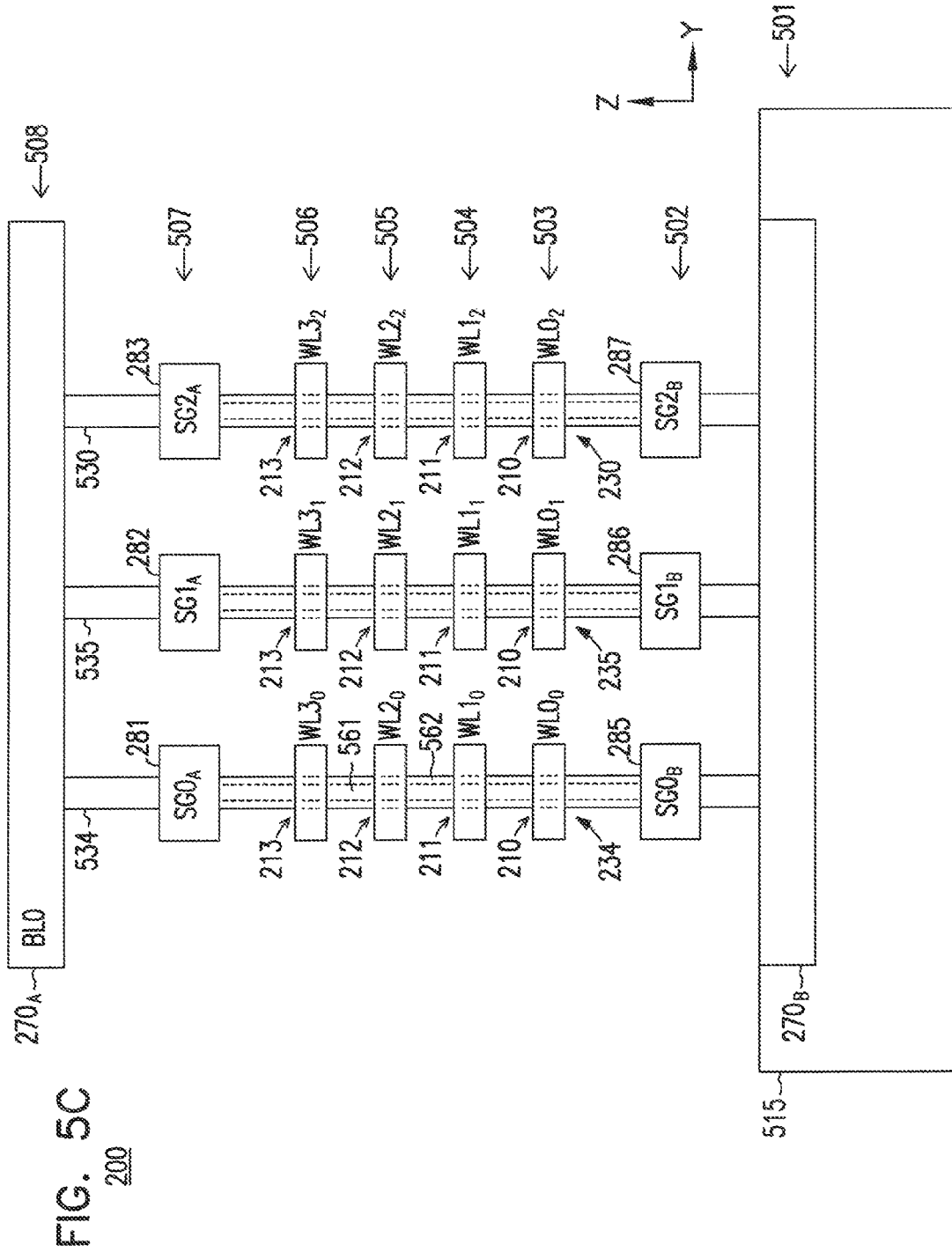
FIG. 4



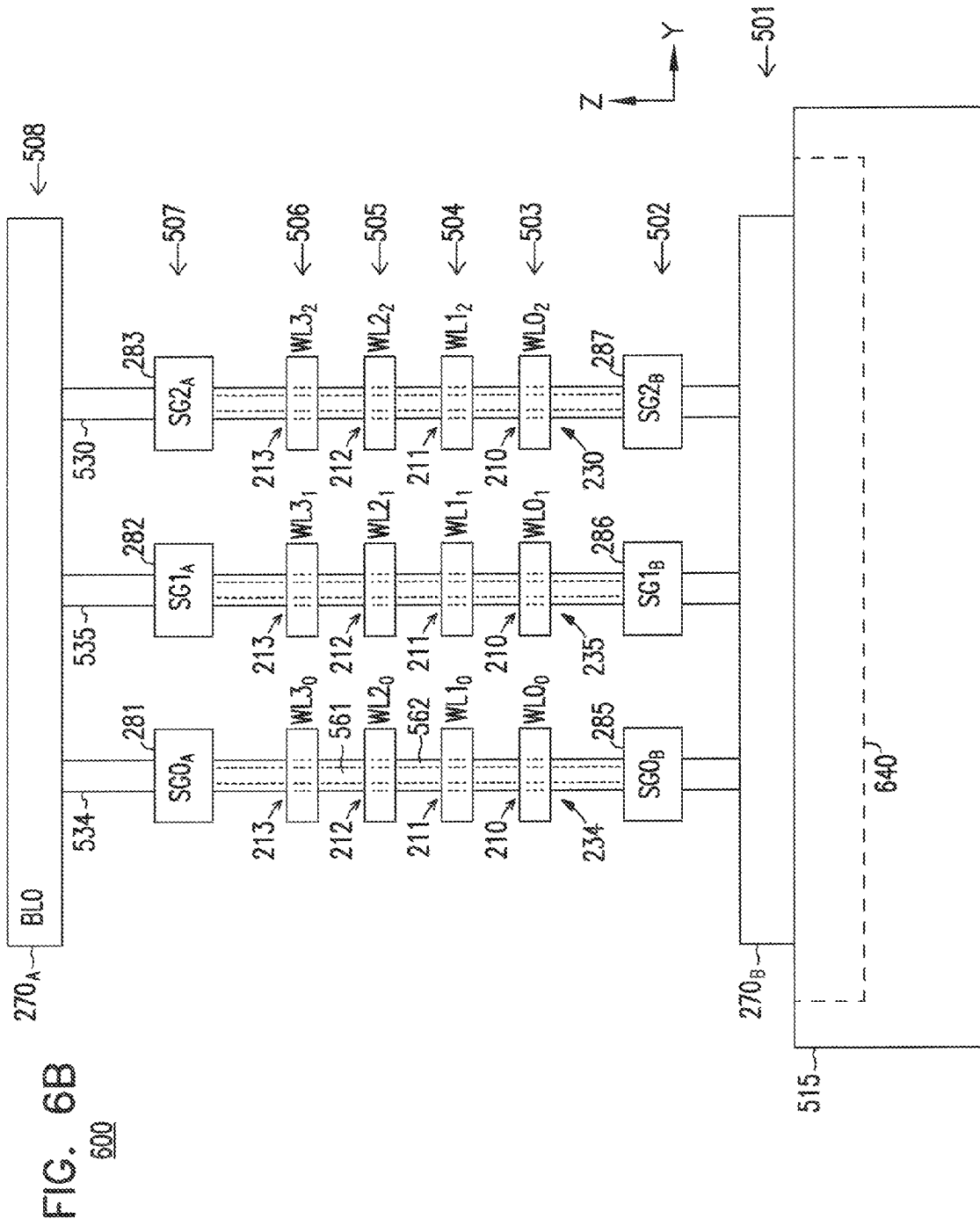












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# MEMORY DEVICES HAVING DATA LINES INCLUDED IN TOP AND BOTTOM CONDUCTIVE LINES

## PRIORITY APPLICATION

This application is a divisional of U.S. application Ser. No. 13/590,964, filed Aug. 21, 2012, issued as U.S. Pat. No. 8,780,631, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

## BACKGROUND

Memory devices, such as flash memory, are widely used in computers and many electronic items. Such memory devices usually have numerous memory cells to store information. Some conventional memory devices may consume relatively less power but they may have lower data throughput. Some other memory devices may have a relatively higher data throughput but they may have higher power consumption. In some cases, designing a memory device with both improved data throughput and power consumption may pose a challenge.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of an apparatus in the form of a memory device, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2A shows a schematic diagram of a portion of a memory device having a set of top data lines formed from a set of conductive lines and another set of bottom data lines formed from another set of conductive lines, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2B repeats specific portions including memory cell sets of the memory device of FIG. 2A, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 3 shows a schematic diagram of a portion of the memory device of FIG. 2A including a sense circuit, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 4 is a timing diagram for the signals of FIG. 3 during an example read operation, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5A shows a side view of a portion of a structure of the memory device of FIG. 2A, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5B shows a top view of the portion of the structure of the memory device of FIG. 5A, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5C shows another side view of a portion of the structure of the memory device of FIG. 2A, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 6A shows a side view of a portion of a structure of the memory device having bottom data lines formed over a substrate, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 6B shows another side view of a portion of the structure of the memory device of FIG. 6A, according to an embodiment of the invention.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of an apparatus in the form of a memory device **100** having a memory array **101** with memory cells **102**, according to an embodiment of the invention. Memory cells **102** can be arranged in rows and columns along with lines **150** and lines **170**. Lines **150** can carry signals WL<sub>0</sub> through WL<sub>m</sub> and can form part of

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access (e.g., word) lines of memory device **100**. Lines **170** can carry signals BL<sub>0</sub> through BL<sub>n</sub> and can form part of array data lines (e.g., bit lines) of memory device **100**.

Memory device **100** may use lines **150** to access memory cells **102**, and lines **170** to exchange information (e.g., provide signals) with memory cells **102**. A row decoder **108** and a column decoder **109** decode address signals A<sub>0</sub> through A<sub>X</sub> on lines **103** (e.g., address lines) to determine which memory cells **102** are to be accessed in a memory operation.

Memory device **100** can perform memory operations such as a read operation to read information from memory cells **102** and a write (e.g., programming) operation to write (e.g., program) information into memory cells **102**. Memory device **100** can also perform an erase operation to clear information from some or all of memory cells **102**.

A memory control unit **118** controls memory operations of memory device **100** based on control signals on lines **104**. Examples of the control signals on lines **104** include one or more clock signals and other signals to indicate which operation (e.g., read, programming, or erase operation) memory device **100** can perform.

Other devices external to memory device **100** (e.g., a memory access device, such as a processor or a memory controller) can control the values of the control signals on lines **104**. Specific values of a combination of the signals on lines **104** can produce a command (e.g., read, programming, or erase command) that can cause memory device **100** to perform a corresponding memory operation (e.g., read, programming, or erase operation).

Memory device **100** can include a select circuit **120** that is configured to selectively couple lines **170** associated with memory cells **102** to sense circuit **140** through lines **174** in a memory operation, such as a read operation.

Sense circuit **140** is configured to determine the value of information from memory cells **102** in a memory operation, such as a read operation, and provide the information in the form of signals to lines **175** (e.g., data lines). Sense circuit **140** can also use the signals on lines **175** to determine the value of information to be written (e.g., programmed) into memory cells **102**.

Memory device **100** can include an input/output (I/O) circuit **117** to exchange information between memory array **101** and lines (e.g., data lines) **105**. I/O circuit **117** can respond to signals CSEL<sub>0</sub> through CSEL<sub>n</sub> to select the signals on lines **175** that can represent the information read from or programmed into memory cells **102**. Column decoder **109** can selectively activate the CSEL<sub>0</sub> through CSEL<sub>n</sub> signals based on the A<sub>0</sub> through A<sub>X</sub> address signals on lines **103**. I/O circuit **117** can select the signals on lines **175** to exchange information between memory array **101** and lines **105** during read and programming operations.

Signals DQ<sub>0</sub> through DQ<sub>N</sub> on lines **105** can represent information to be read from or written into memory cells **102**. Lines **105** can include nodes within memory device **100** or pins (or solder balls) on a package where memory device **100** can reside. Other devices external to memory device **100** (e.g., a memory controller or a processor) can communicate with memory device **100** through lines **103**, **104**, and **105**.

Each of memory cells **102** can be programmed (e.g., programmed to have a certain state) to store information representing a value of a fraction of a bit, a value of a single bit, or a value of multiple bits such as two, three, four, or another number of bits. For example, each of memory cells **102** can be programmed to store information representing a binary value "0" or "1" of a single bit. The single bit per cell

is sometimes called a single level cell. In another example, each of memory cells **102** can be programmed to store information representing a value for multiple bits, such as one of four possible values “00”, “01”, “10”, and “11” of two bits, one of eight possible values “000”, “001”, “010”, “011”, “100”, “101”, “110”, and “111” of three bits, or one of other values of another number of multiple bits. A cell that has the ability to store multiple bits is sometimes called a multi-level cell (or multi-state cell).

Memory device **100** can receive a supply voltage, including supply voltages Vcc and Vss, on lines **106** and **107**, respectively. Supply voltage Vss can operate at a ground potential (e.g., having a value of approximately zero volts). Supply voltage Vcc can include an external voltage supplied to memory device **100** from an external power source such as a battery or an alternating-current to direct-current (AC-DC) converter circuitry.

Memory device **100** can include a non-volatile memory device, and memory cells **102** can include non-volatile memory cells, such that memory cells **102** can retain information stored thereon when power (e.g., Vcc, Vss, or both) is disconnected from memory device **100**. For example, memory device **100** can be a flash memory device, such as a NAND flash or a NOR flash memory device, or another kind of memory device, such as a variable resistance memory device (e.g., a phase change or resistive random access memory (RAM) device).

Memory device **100** can include a memory device where memory cells **102** can be physically located in multiple levels on the same device, such that some of memory cells **102** can be stacked over some other memory cells **102** in multiple levels over a substrate (e.g., a semiconductor substrate) of memory device **100**.

One of ordinary skill in the art may recognize that memory device **100** may include other elements, several of which are not shown in FIG. 1 so as not to obscure the embodiments described herein.

Memory device **100** may include memory devices and operate using memory operations (e.g., read, programming, and erase operations) similar to or identical to memory devices and operations described below with reference to FIG. 2A through FIG. 6B.

FIG. 2A shows a schematic diagram of a portion of a memory device **200** having a set of lines **270<sub>A</sub>**, **271<sub>A</sub>**, **272<sub>A</sub>**, and **273<sub>A</sub>** and a set of lines **270<sub>B</sub>**, **271<sub>B</sub>**, **272<sub>B</sub>**, and **273<sub>B</sub>**, according to an embodiment of the invention. Lines **270**, **271**, **272**, and **273** can be structured as a set of conductive lines. Lines **270<sub>B</sub>**, **271<sub>B</sub>**, **272<sub>B</sub>**, and **273<sub>B</sub>** can be structured as another set of conductive lines.

At least a portion of lines **270<sub>A</sub>**, **271<sub>A</sub>**, **272<sub>A</sub>**, and **273<sub>A</sub>** (e.g., lines **270<sub>A</sub>** and **272<sub>A</sub>**) can be configured as a set of data lines (e.g., top data lines). At least a portion of lines **270<sub>B</sub>**, **271<sub>B</sub>**, **272<sub>B</sub>**, and **273<sub>B</sub>** (e.g., lines **271<sub>B</sub>** and **273<sub>B</sub>**) can be configured as another set of data lines (e.g., bottom data lines). Lines **270<sub>A</sub>**, **272<sub>A</sub>**, **271<sub>B</sub>**, and **273<sub>B</sub>** can carry signals BL0, BL2, BL1, and BL3, respectively.

Memory device **200** can include lines (e.g., access line) **250<sub>0</sub>**, **251<sub>0</sub>**, **252<sub>0</sub>**, and **253<sub>0</sub>** that can carry corresponding signals WL0<sub>0</sub>, WL1<sub>0</sub>, WL2<sub>0</sub>, and WL3<sub>0</sub>. Lines (e.g., access lines) **250<sub>1</sub>**, **251<sub>1</sub>**, **252<sub>1</sub>**, and **253<sub>1</sub>** can carry corresponding signals WL0<sub>1</sub>, WL1<sub>1</sub>, WL2<sub>1</sub>, and WL3<sub>1</sub>. Lines (e.g., access lines) **250<sub>2</sub>**, **251<sub>2</sub>**, **252<sub>2</sub>**, and **253<sub>2</sub>** can carry corresponding signals WL0<sub>2</sub>, WL1<sub>2</sub>, WL2<sub>2</sub>, and WL3<sub>2</sub>. Lines (e.g., access lines) **250<sub>3</sub>**, **251<sub>3</sub>**, **252<sub>3</sub>**, and **253<sub>3</sub>** can carry corresponding signals WL0<sub>3</sub>, WL1<sub>3</sub>, WL2<sub>3</sub>, and WL3<sub>3</sub>.

FIG. 2A shows a particular number of access lines and data lines as an example. However, the number of these lines can vary.

Memory device **200** can include sense circuits **240**, **241**, **242**, and **243**, and transistors **220<sub>A</sub>**, **221<sub>A</sub>**, **222<sub>A</sub>**, **223<sub>A</sub>**, **220<sub>B</sub>**, **221<sub>B</sub>**, **222<sub>B</sub>**, and **223<sub>B</sub>**. These transistors can form part of a select circuit, such as select circuit **120** of FIG. 1.

In a memory operation (e.g., a read operation), transistors **220<sub>A</sub>** and **222<sub>A</sub>** can respond to a signal BLS<sub>A</sub> to couple lines **270<sub>A</sub>** and **272<sub>A</sub>** to sense circuits **240** and **242**, respectively. Transistors **221<sub>B</sub>** and **223<sub>B</sub>** can respond to a signal BLS<sub>B</sub> to couple lines **271<sub>B</sub>** and **273<sub>B</sub>** to sense circuits **241** and **243**, respectively. Signals BLS<sub>A</sub> and BLS<sub>B</sub> can have the same value during a memory operation. Thus, signal BLS<sub>A</sub> and BLS<sub>B</sub> can be the same signal.

Transistors **221<sub>A</sub>** and **223<sub>A</sub>** can respond to a signal GBL<sub>A</sub> to couple lines **271<sub>A</sub>** and **273<sub>A</sub>** to a node **299** (e.g., a common node). Node **299** can be coupled to a ground potential. Transistors **220<sub>B</sub>** and **222<sub>B</sub>** can respond to a signal GBL<sub>B</sub> to couple lines **270<sub>B</sub>** and **272<sub>B</sub>** to node **299**. Signal GBL<sub>A</sub> and GBL<sub>B</sub> can have the same value during a memory operation. Thus, signal GBL<sub>A</sub> and GBL<sub>B</sub> can be the same signal.

Memory device **200** can include memory cells **210**, **211**, **212**, and **213**, and transistors (e.g., select transistors) **261**, **262**, **263**, **265**, **266**, and **267**. Memory cells **210**, **211**, **212**, and **213** can be arranged in memory cell strings, such as memory cell strings **230**, **231**, **232**, **233**, **234**, and **235**. For simplicity, only six (**230**, **231**, **232**, **233**, **234**, and **235**) of the 12 memory cell strings in FIG. 2A are labeled.

Each memory cell string in memory device **200** can be coupled to two associated transistors among transistors **261**, **262**, **263**, **265**, **266**, and **267**. For example, memory cell string **230** can be coupled to transistor **263** (directly over string **230**) and transistor **267** (directly under string **230**). FIG. 2A shows a memory cell string (e.g., **230**, **231**, **232**, **233**, **234**, or **235**) including only memory cells (e.g., **210**, **211**, **212**, and **213**) as an example. However, a memory cell string may not necessarily include only memory cells. A memory cell string can include, in addition to memory cells, transistors (select transistors) coupled to the memory cells such as a transistor directly over the memory cells in the memory cell string and a transistor directly underneath the memory cells in the memory cell string. For example, in FIG. 2A, memory cell string **230** can include memory cells **210**, **211**, **212**, and **213** and transistor **263** (directly over string **230**) and transistor **267** (directly under string **230**).

FIG. 2A shows an example of 12 memory cell strings and four memory cells **210**, **211**, **212**, and **213** in each memory cell string. The number of such memory cell strings and the number of memory cells in each memory cell string can vary.

As shown in FIG. 2A, memory device **200** can include lines **281**, **282**, and **283** coupled to gates of transistors **261**, **262**, and **263**, respectively. Lines **281**, **282**, and **283** can form part of select lines of memory device **200** and can carry signals SG0<sub>A</sub>, SG1<sub>A</sub>, and SG2<sub>A</sub> (e.g., top select gate signals), respectively. Memory device **200** can include lines **285**, **286**, and **287** coupled to gates of transistors **265**, **266**, and **267**, respectively. Lines **285**, **286**, and **287** can form part of select lines of memory device **200** and can carry signals SG0<sub>B</sub>, SG1<sub>B</sub>, and SG2<sub>B</sub> (e.g., bottom select gate signals), respectively.

Transistors **261**, **262**, and **263** can be controlled (e.g., turned on or turned off) by signals SG0<sub>A</sub>, SG1<sub>A</sub>, and SG2<sub>A</sub>, respectively. Transistors **265**, **266**, and **267** can be controlled (e.g., turned on or turned off) by signals SG0<sub>B</sub>, SG1<sub>B</sub>, and SG2<sub>B</sub>, respectively. Signal SG0<sub>A</sub> and SG0<sub>B</sub> can have the

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same value during a memory operation. Thus, signal SG0<sub>A</sub> and SG0<sub>B</sub> can be the same signal. Signal SG1<sub>A</sub> and SG1<sub>B</sub> can have the same value during a memory operation. Thus, signal SG1<sub>A</sub> and SG1<sub>B</sub> can be the same signal. Signal SG2<sub>A</sub> and SG2<sub>B</sub> can have the same value during a memory operation. Thus, signal SG2<sub>A</sub> and SG2<sub>B</sub> can be the same signal.

In a memory operation (e.g., a read operation), sense circuits 240, 241, 242, and 243 can generate signals SDout0, SDout1, SDout2, and SDout3, respectively. The levels of signals SDout0, SDout1, SDout2, and SDout3 can be based on the levels of signals BL0, BL1, BL2, and BL3, respectively. The levels of signal SDout0, SDout1, SDout2, and SDout3 can be used to determine the states (e.g., values) of information stored in memory cells 210, 211, 212, and 213 of a selected memory cell set, as described in more detail below.

FIG. 2B repeats specific portions of the memory device of FIG. 2A, including memory cell sets formed by memory cells 210, 211, 212, and 213 of memory cell strings 230, 231, 232, and 233. As shown in FIG. 2B, memory cells 210, 211, 212, and 213 can be arranged in memory cell sets in rows, such that each of the memory cell sets can be included in a different row. For example, in FIG. 2B, memory cells 210 can be arranged in a memory cell set 210<sub>2</sub> in row 290. Memory cells 211 can be arranged in a memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> in row 291. Memory cells 212 can be arranged in a memory cell set 212<sub>2</sub> in row 292. Memory cells 213 can be arranged in a memory cell set 213<sub>2</sub> in row 293. FIG. 2B shows an example of four memory cell sets in four respective rows; the number of memory cell sets and the number of corresponding rows can vary.

Memory cells of a memory cell set in a row can share (e.g., be directly coupled to) the same access line. For example, memory cells 210 of memory cell set 210<sub>2</sub> can share the same line 250<sub>2</sub>. Memory cells 211 of memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> can share the same line 251<sub>2</sub>. Memory cells 212 of memory cell set 212<sub>2</sub> can share the same line 252<sub>2</sub>. Memory cells 213 of memory cell set 213<sub>2</sub> can share the same line 253<sub>2</sub>.

Each of the memory cell sets can include four memory cells from four different memory cell strings. For example, memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> can include four memory cells 210 from four different memory cell strings 230, 231, 232, and 233. In another example, memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> can include four memory cells 211 from four different memory cell strings 230, 231, 232, and 233. FIG. 2B shows an example of four memory cells in each memory cell set; the number of memory cells in each memory cell set can vary.

Memory cells in other memory cell strings (e.g., 234, 235, and other memory cell strings in FIG. 2A) of memory device 200 can also be arranged in memory cell sets in different rows similar to those of the memory cells of memory cell strings 230, 231, 232, and 233 of FIG. 2B.

In a memory operation (e.g., read or write operation), memory device 200 can select memory cell strings to access a memory cell set of the selected memory cell strings. For example, memory device 200 can select memory cell strings 230, 231, 232, and 233 to access a memory cell set 210<sub>2</sub>, 211<sub>2</sub>, 212<sub>2</sub>, or 213<sub>2</sub>. The memory cell sets in memory device 200 (FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B) can be selected one memory cell set at a time. A selected memory cell set refers to the memory cell set that is selected to be accessed in a memory operation, so that memory device 200 can (e.g., in a write operation) store information in memory cells in the selected

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memory cell set or obtain (e.g., in a read operation) stored information from memory cells in the selected memory cell set.

In FIG. 2A, memory device 200 can selectively turn on transistors 261, 262, 263, 265, 266, and 267 in a memory operation (e.g., a read or write operation). This enables a selected memory cell set included in the selected memory cell strings to be coupled to respective lines among lines 270<sub>A</sub>, 271<sub>A</sub>, 272<sub>A</sub>, and 273<sub>A</sub> and lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub>.

In a memory operation, memory device 200 can turn on transistors (among transistors 261, 262, 263, 265, 266, and 267) that are associated with selected memory cell strings. For example, if memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> (FIG. 2B) is a selected memory cell set, memory device 200 can turn on transistors 263 and 267 by, for example, providing appropriate voltages to signals SG2<sub>A</sub> and SG2<sub>B</sub>, respectively.

In a memory operation, memory device 200 can turn off transistors (among transistors 261, 262, 263, 265, 266, and 267) that are associated with unselected memory cell strings. Unselected memory cell strings refer to the memory cell strings that have no memory cells included in the selected memory cell set. For example, in FIG. 2B, if memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> is the selected memory cell set, memory device 200 (FIG. 2A) can turn off transistors 261, 262, 265, and 266 by, for example, providing appropriate voltages to signals SG0<sub>A</sub>, SG2<sub>A</sub>, SG1<sub>B</sub>, and SG3<sub>B</sub>, respectively.

In a write operation, memory device 200 can concurrently store information in memory cells of a selected memory cell set. For example, if memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> in FIG. 2B is selected, then memory device 200 can concurrently store information in four memory cells 211 of memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub>. In this example, memory device 200 can store information in two memory cells 211 (in memory cell strings 230 and 232) based on values of signals on lines 270<sub>A</sub> and 272<sub>A</sub> (e.g., signals BL0 and BL2), respectively. Memory device 200 can store information in the other two memory cells 211 (in memory cell strings 230 and 232) based on values of signals on lines 271<sub>B</sub> and 273<sub>B</sub> (e.g., signals BL1 and BL3).

In a read operation, memory device 200 can concurrently obtain information from memory cells of a selected memory cell set. For example, in FIG. 2B, if memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> is selected, then memory device 200 can concurrently obtain information in memory cells 211 of memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub>. In this example, memory device 200 can obtain information from two memory cells 211 (in memory cell strings 230 and 232) based on values of signals on lines 270<sub>A</sub> and 272<sub>A</sub> (e.g., signals BL0 and BL2), respectively. Memory device 200 can obtain information in the other two memory cells 211 (in memory cell strings 230 and 232) based on values of signals on lines 271<sub>B</sub> and 273<sub>B</sub> (e.g., signals BL1 and BL3).

Thus, as described above, memory device 200 can perform an operation on a portion (e.g., one half) of the memory cells of a selected memory cell set through lines 270<sub>A</sub> and 272<sub>A</sub> (e.g., top data lines) and on another portion (the other half) of the memory cells of the selected memory cell set through lines 271<sub>B</sub> and 273<sub>B</sub> (e.g., bottom data lines). The operation can include a read or write operation.

FIG. 3 shows a schematic diagram of a portion of memory device 200 including sense circuit 240, according to an embodiment of the invention. As shown in FIG. 3, sense circuit 240 can include transistors 328 and 329 and a sense stage 325. Transistor 328 can be located between a supply node 306 and a node 370. Supply node 306 can be provided with a voltage (e.g., supply voltage) Vcc. Transistors 328 and 329 can be controlled by signals PreCh and Vclamp, respectively. Sense stage 325 can generate signals SDout0

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based on signal SDin0. Transistors 328 and 329 are shown as part of sense circuit 340 as an example. Transistor 328 or 329, or both, can be separated from sense circuit 340. For example, transistor 328 can be part of a precharge circuit (not shown) and transistor 329 can be part of another circuit (e.g., a clamp circuit, not shown) of memory device 200.

FIG. 4 is a timing diagram for the signals of FIG. 3 during an example read operation of memory device 200 (FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B), according to an embodiment of the invention. In the read operation associated with FIG. 4, as described below, memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub> in row 291 (FIG. 2B) is assumed to be a selected memory cell set. Thus, in FIG. 2B, line 251<sub>2</sub> can be a selected access line. Lines 250<sub>2</sub>, 252<sub>2</sub>, and 253<sub>2</sub> can be unselected access lines. During the example read operation, each of signals BL0, BL1, BL2, and BL3 (FIG. 2A) can indicate the state of a respective memory cell 211 of memory cell set 211<sub>2</sub>.

In FIG. 4, times T0 through T4 represent different times during a read operation. Voltages V0 through V8 represent different voltages that can be provided to the signals of FIG. 4. The values (e.g., 0.5V, 1V, 1.2V, 1.5V, and 5V) associated with the voltages in FIG. 4 are example values. Other values can be used. The waveforms in FIG. 4 are not scaled.

At time T0 during the read operation, signal BLS<sub>A</sub> can change from voltage V0 to voltage V8 to couple line 270<sub>A</sub> (FIG. 3) to sense circuit 240. Signal PreCh can change from voltage V5 to voltage V0 to couple node 370 to supply node 306. Signal Vclamp can change from voltage V0 to voltage V4 to couple line 270<sub>A</sub> to node 370. With this condition, signal BL0 can change from voltage V0 to voltage V1, indicating that line 270<sub>A</sub> is charged (e.g., precharged) to voltage V1. Signal SDin0 can change from level 400 to level 401. Each of levels 400 and 401 can correspond to a certain voltage.

At time T1, signal Vclamp can change from voltage V4 to voltage V0 to decouple line 270<sub>A</sub> from node 370. This may put line 270<sub>A</sub> in a floating state (e.g., electrically unconnected to node 370 and sense stage 325).

At time T2, signals SG2<sub>A</sub> and SG2<sub>B</sub> (FIG. 2B) can change from voltage V0 to voltage V7. Signal WL0<sub>2</sub>, WL2<sub>2</sub>, and WL3<sub>2</sub> (associated with unselected access lines in this example) can change from voltage V0 to voltage V6. Signal WL1<sub>2</sub> (associated with the unselected access line in this example) can change from voltage V0 to voltage V2. The time interval from time T0 to time T2 can be a precharge time interval where line 270<sub>A</sub> can be charged to voltage V1. Time T1 can be the beginning of the precharge time interval. Time T2 can be the end of the precharge time interval. Thus, at time T2 in FIG. 4, signal PreCh can change from voltage V0 to voltage V5 to decouple node 370 from supply node 306.

From time T2 and after, signal BL0 can have either voltage V0 or voltage V1, depending on the state of memory cell 211 (a selected memory cell) of memory cell string 230 (FIG. 2B). For example, if memory cell 211 of memory cell string 230 has one state, then signal BL0 can remain at voltage V1. If memory cell 211 of memory cell string 230 has another state, then signal BL0 can change (e.g., discharge) from voltage V1 to voltage V0. The state of a memory cell (e.g., memory cell 211 of memory cell string 230, in this example) corresponds to a value of information stored that memory cell.

The time interval from time T3 to time T4 can be a sense time interval where sense stage 325 can operate to sense the level (e.g., voltage) of BL0 (e.g., by way of signal SDin0). Thus, at time T3 in FIG. 4, signal Vclamp can change from voltage V0 to voltage V5 to couple line 270<sub>A</sub> to node 370.

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At time T3, signal Vclamp can change from V0 to voltage V3. From time T3 and after, signal SDin0 can have either a level 400 or a level 401, depending on the voltage of signal BL0. For example, if signal BL0 has voltage V1, then signal SDin0 can remain at level 401. If signal BL0 has voltage V0, then signal SDin0 can change from level 401 to level 400.

At time T4, signals SG2<sub>A</sub>, SG2<sub>B</sub>, WL0<sub>2</sub>, WL1<sub>2</sub>, WL2<sub>2</sub>, WL3<sub>2</sub>, BLS<sub>A</sub>, and Vclamp can change from their respective voltage to voltage V0. Signal SDout0 can have either a level 411 or a level 412, depending on state of memory cell 211 of memory cell string 230 (FIG. 2B). For example, signal SDout0 can have level 411 if memory cell 211 of memory cell string 230 has one state. Signal SDout0 can have level 412 if memory cell 211 of memory cell string 230 has another state. Each of levels 411 and 412 can correspond to a certain voltage.

Other sense circuits 241, 242, and 243 (FIG. 2A) of memory device 200 can include features similar to or identical to those of sense circuit 240 of FIG. 3. Thus, in a read operation of memory device 200, as described above with reference to FIG. 3 and FIG. 4, sense circuits 241, 242, and 243 and their associated signals can have waveforms similar to those shown in FIG. 4.

Memory device 200 (FIG. 2A) may have an improved (e.g., increased) data throughput. For example, in comparison with some conventional memory devices (e.g., devices with shielded data line architecture), the number of memory cells of memory device 200 that memory device 200 can concurrently access (e.g., in a read or operation) can be twice the number of memory cells that the conventional memory devices can access. The improved data throughput of memory device 200 can be attributed to the arrangement of data lines (e.g., top and bottom data lines, as described above with reference to FIG. 2A to FIG. 4).

Memory device 200 may also have an improved (e.g., lower) power consumption. For example, in comparison with some memory devices, memory device 200 may use only a portion (e.g., from time T3 to time T4 in FIG. 4) of a read operation to sense signals (e.g., BL0, BL1, BL2, and BL3) on the data lines in order to determine the state of selected memory cells. Some conventional memory devices may use a relatively greater time interval for similar sensing. Since memory device 200 uses a smaller time interval for sensing during a read operation, its power consumption during a read operation may be lower than that of some conventional memory devices.

FIG. 5A shows a side view of a portion of a structure of memory device 200 of FIG. 2A, according to an embodiment of the invention. FIG. 5B shows a top view of the structure of memory device 200 of FIG. 5A. FIG. 5C shows another side view of the structure of memory device 200 of FIG. 2A.

As shown in FIG. 5A, memory device 200 can include a substrate 515, which can be formed from a semiconductor material, such as silicon. Memory device 200 can include different levels 501 through 508 overlying substrate 515 in a Z-direction, which is substantially perpendicular (e.g., perpendicular) to an X-direction and a Y-direction (FIG. 5C).

In FIG. 5A, lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub> can be located on level 501. Lines 270<sub>A</sub>, 271<sub>A</sub>, 272<sub>A</sub>, and 273<sub>A</sub> can be located on level 508. Memory cells 210, 211, 212, and 213 can be located on levels 503, 504, 505, and 506, respectively. Lines 270<sub>A</sub>, 271<sub>A</sub>, 272<sub>A</sub>, and 273<sub>A</sub> can be separate layers of conductive materials overlying memory cells 210, 211, 212 and 213 and substrate 515. Lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub> can be separate layers of conductive

material located in (e.g., formed in or formed on) substrate 515. FIG. 5B shows an example where lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub> can be separate doped regions (e.g., conductive p-type or n-type doped regions) formed in substrate 515. However, lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub> can be separate layers of conductive material formed over substrate 515.

Each of memory cell strings (e.g., 230, 231, 232, and 233) can be located between a respective line among lines 270<sub>A</sub>, 271<sub>A</sub>, 272<sub>A</sub>, and 273<sub>A</sub> and a respective line among lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub>. Lines 283 and 287 can be located on levels 507 and 502, respectively.

As shown in FIG. 5A and FIG. 5C, transistors 261, 262, and 263 (FIG. 2A) can be located on level 507 and surrounded by corresponding lines 281, 282, and 283. Transistors 265, 266, and 267 (FIG. 2A) can be located on level 502 (FIG. 5C) and surrounded by corresponding lines 285, 286, and 287. Each of memory cell strings (e.g., 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, and 235) of memory device 200 can include a body region 561 having a length in the Z-direction. Access lines of memory device 200 can be located along the length of body regions of respective memory cell strings. For example, lines (e.g., access lines) 250<sub>2</sub>, 251<sub>2</sub>, 252<sub>2</sub>, and 253<sub>2</sub> can be located along the length of respective body regions 561 of memory cell strings 230, 231, 232, and 233.

As shown in FIG. 5A, FIG. 5B, and FIG. 5C, memory device 200 can include contacts, such as 530, 531, 532, 533, 544, and 535, coupled between respective memory cell strings (e.g., 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, and 235) and lines 270<sub>A</sub>, 271<sub>A</sub>, 272<sub>A</sub>, and 273<sub>A</sub>. Each of memory cell strings (e.g., 230 through 235) can also include a material 562 between body region 561 and corresponding access lines. For example, as shown in FIG. 5A, memory cell strings 230, 231, 232, and 233 can include material 562 between region 561 and lines 250<sub>2</sub>, 251<sub>2</sub>, 252<sub>2</sub>, and 253<sub>2</sub>. Material 562 can substantially surround body region 561. Each of access lines (e.g., 250<sub>2</sub>, 251<sub>2</sub>, 252<sub>2</sub>, and 253<sub>2</sub> in FIG. 5A) can substantially surround a cross section of body region 561 of a respective memory cell string (e.g., 230, 231, 232, and 233). The cross section of body region 561 can have a circular shape. Body region 561 can include semiconductor material, such as silicon (e.g., doped polysilicon of p-type or n-type).

Material 562 can include a material (or materials) that can be configured to store information in memory cells 210, 211, 212, and 213. For example, material 562 can include charge storage material, such as a combination of a tunnel dielectric layer, a silicon oxide layer, and a charge blocking layer, or a combination of a silicon nitride layer, a polysilicon layer, and a nitride layer, or other materials that can provide a charge storage function to represent a value of information stored in the memory cells of memory cells 210, 211, 212, and 213. As an example, material 562 can include a combination of a tunnel dielectric directly contacting the body region 561, a charge storage material (e.g., polysilicon floating gate) directly contacting the tunnel dielectric, and a charge blocking material directly contacting the charge storage material.

FIG. 5B also shows the location of memory cell set 213<sub>2</sub> that includes memory cells 213 arranged in row 293. As described above with reference to FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B, when a memory cell set is selected, information can be stored in (e.g., in a write operation) or obtained from (in a read operation) a portion of the memory cell set through different sets of data lines (e.g., top and bottom data lines). For example, in FIG. 5B, when memory cell set 213<sub>2</sub> is selected, information can be stored in or obtained from two memory cells 213 of memory cell set 213<sub>2</sub> through lines

270<sub>A</sub> and 272<sub>A</sub> (e.g., top data lines) and the other two memory cells 213 of memory cell set 213<sub>2</sub> through lines 271<sub>B</sub> and 273<sub>B</sub> (e.g., bottom data lines).

FIG. 6A shows a side view of a portion of a structure of a memory device 600 having lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub> (e.g., including bottom data lines 271<sub>B</sub> and 273<sub>B</sub>) formed over substrate 515, according to an embodiment of the invention. FIG. 6B shows another side view of a portion of the structure of memory device 600 of FIG. 6A, according to an embodiment of the invention.

Memory device 600 can be a variation of memory device 200 described above with reference to FIG. 2A through FIG. 5C. Thus, memory device 600 can include elements similar to or identical to those of memory device 200. For simplicity, the description of similar or identical elements between memory devices 200 and 600 is not repeated in the description of FIG. 6A and FIG. 6B.

As shown in FIG. 6A and FIG. 6B, lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub> can be formed as separate layers of conductive material over substrate 515. Substrate 515 can include a portion 640 underneath lines 270<sub>B</sub>, 271<sub>B</sub>, 272<sub>B</sub>, and 273<sub>B</sub>. In portion 640, elements such as transistors for sense circuits of memory device 600 (e.g., similar to sense circuit 140 in FIG. 1, or sense circuits 240, 241, 242, and 243 in FIG. 2A) or for other elements of memory device 600 can be formed.

The illustrations of the apparatus (e.g., memory device 200) are intended to provide a general understanding of the structure of various embodiments and are not intended to provide a complete description of all the elements and features of an apparatus that might make use of the structures described herein.

The apparatuses (e.g., memory device 200 or part of memory device 200, including memory control unit 118 of FIG. 1 and sense circuit 240 of FIG. 2A and FIG. 3) described above may all be characterized as “modules” (or “module”) herein. Such modules may include hardware circuitry, single and/or multi-processor circuits, memory circuits, software program modules and objects and/or firmware, and combinations thereof, as desired and/or as appropriate for particular implementations of various embodiments.

Memory device 200 may be included in apparatuses (e.g., electronic circuitry) such as high-speed computers, communication and signal processing circuitry, single or multi-processor modules, single or multiple embedded processors, multi-core processors, message information switches, and application-specific modules including multilayer, multi-chip modules. Such apparatuses may further be included as sub-components within a variety of other apparatuses (e.g., electronic systems), such as televisions, cellular telephones, personal computers (e.g., laptop computers, desktop computers, handheld computers, tablet computers, etc.), workstations, radios, video players, audio players (e.g., MP3 (Motion Picture Experts Group, Audio Layer 3) players), vehicles, medical devices (e.g., heart monitor, blood pressure monitor, etc.), set top boxes, and others.

The embodiments described above with reference to FIG. 1 through FIG. 6B include apparatuses and methods having a first set of conductive lines, a second set of conductive lines, and memory cells located in different levels of the apparatus and arranged in memory cell strings. At least a portion of the first set of conductive lines is configured as a first set of data lines. At least a portion of the second set of conductive lines is configured as a second set of data lines. Each of the memory strings is coupled to a respective conductive line in the first set of conductive lines and a



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respective conductive line in the second set of conductive lines. Other embodiments including additional apparatuses and methods are described.

The above description and the drawings illustrate some embodiments of the invention to enable those skilled in the art to practice the embodiments of the invention. Other embodiments may incorporate structural, logical, electrical, process, and other changes. Examples merely typify possible variations. Portions and features of some embodiments may be included in, or substituted for, those of others. Many other embodiments will be apparent to those of skill in the art upon reading and understanding the above description.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:
  - a first set of conductive lines located on a first level of the apparatus;
  - a second set of conductive lines located on a second level of the apparatus;
  - memory cell strings, each of the memory strings coupled to a respective conductive line in the first set of conductive lines and a respective conductive line in the second set of conductive lines; and
  - a module configured to obtain information from a first portion of the memory cell strings through a portion of the first set of conductive lines and to obtain information from a second portion of the memory cell strings through a portion of the second set of conductive lines.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the module is configured to couple another portion of the first set of conductive lines to a common node during an operation of the apparatus.
3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the module is configured to couple another portion of the second set of conductive lines to the common node during the operation of the apparatus.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, the module is configured to concurrently obtain information from the first and second portions of the memory cell strings.
5. An apparatus comprising:
  - a memory cell set including memory cells;
  - a first set of data lines located on a first level of the apparatus;
  - a second set of data lines located on a second level of the apparatus; and
  - a module configured to perform a first operation to obtain information from a first portion of the memory cells through the first set of data lines and to obtain information from a second portion of the memory cells through the second set of data lines, and a second operation to store information in the first portion of the memory cells through the first set of data lines and to store information in the second portion of the memory cells through the second set of data lines.
6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the memory cells are arranged in a same row.
7. The apparatus of claim 5, further comprising:
  - additional memory cells arranged in an additional row;
  - a first access line shared by the memory cells; and
  - a second access line shared by the additional memory cells, wherein the module is configured to obtain information from a first portion of the additional memory cells through the first set of data lines and to obtain

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information from a second portion of the additional memory cells through the second set of data lines.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the memory cells and the additional memory cells are located in a same level of the apparatus.

9. A method comprising:

selecting a first memory cell string in an operation of a device, the first memory cell string coupled to a first conductive line in a first set of conductive lines located on a first level of the device and coupled to a first conductive line in a second set of conductive lines located on a second level of the device, wherein at least one conductive line in the first set of conductive lines is configured as a data line; and

selecting a second memory cell string in the operation of a device, the second memory cell string coupled to a second conductive line in a first set of conductive lines and coupled to a second conductive line in the second set of conductive lines, wherein at least one conductive line in the second set of conductive lines is configured as a data line.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the operation includes a read operation.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the operation includes a write operation.

12. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

obtaining information from a first memory cell in the first memory cell string through the first conductive line in the first set of conductive lines; and

obtaining information from a second memory cell in the second memory cell string through the second conductive line in the second set of conductive lines.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein first and second memory cells share a same access line.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein obtaining the information from the first memory cell and obtaining the information from the second memory cell are performed concurrently.

15. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the portion of the first set of conductive lines is configured as a portion of a set of data lines.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the portion of the second set of conductive lines is configured as a portion of another set of data lines.

17. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the common node is configured to couple to ground potential.

18. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising sense circuits, each of the sense circuits coupled to a respective conductive line in the portions of the first and second sets of conductive lines.

19. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the portion of the first set of conductive lines includes conductive material formed in a substrate, and the portion of the second set of conductive lines includes conductive material formed over the substrate.

20. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the portion of the first set of conductive lines includes conductive material formed over a substrate, and the portion of the second set of conductive lines includes conductive material formed over the substrate.

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